

How Abortion Has Weakened Social Security

John D. Mueller

Many baby boomers resent what they perceive to be a "raw deal" from Social Security, the "pay-as-you-go" system where roughly each generation of workers pays the retirement benefits for their parent's generation. While their parents have reaped a generous return on their Social Security taxes, the boomers fear they will receive far lower rates of return on what they have paid into the system. The reason: today more than 3.4 workers support each Social Security beneficiary; when the boomers retire, two workers or fewer are projected to support each beneficiary. Due to these demographic changes, the Social Security Administration predicts that the system will go permanently into the red in 2015, necessitating tax increases, benefits cuts, or both.

Boomers rarely consider that what might be a

raw deal for their generation is largely self-inflicted. Today's relatively high worker-to-beneficiary ratio exists for one simple reason: the

average retired couple today had more than three children during their child-rearing days. In contrast, the boomer generation is the first to practice abortion. Since the legalization of abortion, those of child-producing age have been mostly boomers. As a result, they are now left with a relatively smaller progeny than their parents. Most of the decline in live births and future taxpaying workers since the late 1960s is due to legal abortions. If not for legal abortions, the ratio of

workers per beneficiary would be even higher today, about 3.6 workers for every Social Security beneficiary, instead of the current 3.4; in 2050 the

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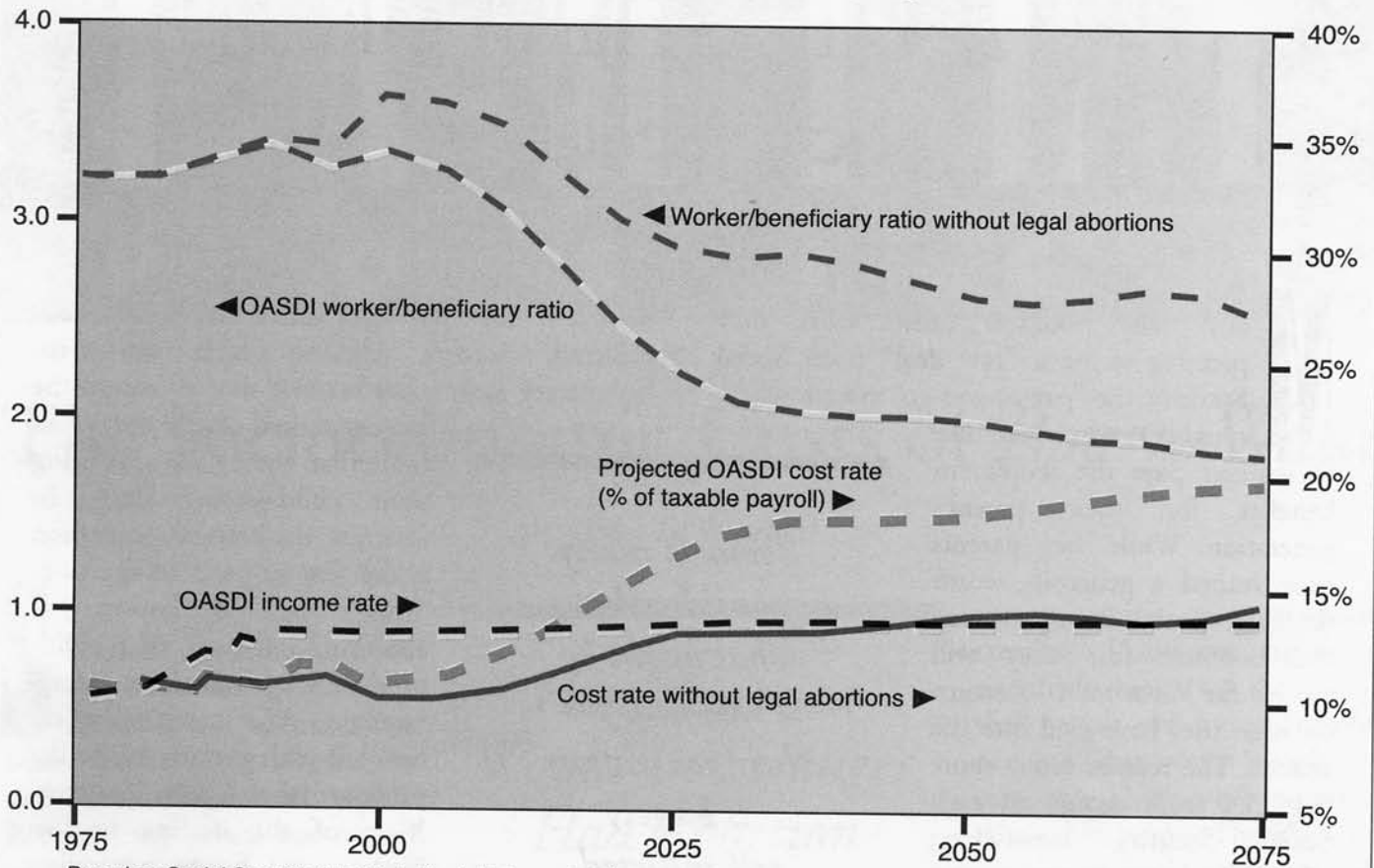
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Legal Abortions and Social Security

Old-Age, Survivors and Disability (OASDI) Programs



Based on Social Security Administration's "Intermediate" assumptions.
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Abortion and Social Security

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ratio would be 2.7 workers for every beneficiary, instead of the projected 2.0. If the other factors projected by the Social Security actuaries remained constant, the choosing of life over abortion by the boomers would have kept the Social Security system in balance indefinitely—with a large cumulative surplus—without either raising payroll tax rates from current levels or cutting promised benefits. If legal abortion were ended today, it would begin to affect the worker-beneficiary ratio only around 2020. By 2050, however, the ratio would increase by enough to remove about 44 percent of the annual deficit now expected by the Social Security Actuaries. **FP**

Letters to the Editor

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